

Garbage Gazette

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

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Mercury Collection Campaign Begins

You can get that mercury fever thermometer safely out of your medicine cabinet, and help the DEP meet its goal to collect 2001 pounds of mercury. Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr., announced the Mercury Collection Campaign with the unveiling of a large replica of a thermometer in front of its office building on 79 Elm Street. The thermometer replica will be used to publicly track the accumulating quantities of mercury until it reaches 2001 pounds in the fall of 2001. "Although mercury performs many useful functions, it is toxic to humans and wildlife and can impair health when it is released into the environment through spills or incineration" said Dr. Joxel Garcia, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Mercury acts as a poison to the central nervous systems in humans. Children, especially those under the age of 6, are more susceptible to mercury poisoning.



The yearlong campaign is happening throughout the state, and was kicked off during National Pollution Prevention Week with enthusiasm in Hartford at the DEP's two mercury thermometer exchanges. During the two exchanges, the DEP collected over 1200 mercury fever thermometers and gave out new alkaline battery operated digital thermometers as replacements. DEP staff gave out new thermometers, and recipients of new thermometers got demonstrations on how to use the digital models.



DEP is gathering mercury-containing automotive switches, mercury stored in school labs, and mercury-containing manometer gages used on dairy farms. The total mercury collected will include quantities of mercury removed from Connecticut hospitals through the replacement of mercury-containing devices including blood pressure cuffs and thermometers. Mercury is also found in household items including thermostats, barometers and fluorescent lighting tubes. Collection of these items at household hazardous waste facilities will be counted toward the state goal.

Through all these continuing efforts, DEP will meet its goal of 2001 pounds of mercury collected by fall of 2001. Do you want to know more? Check DEP's website <http://dep.state.ct.us> for household products containing mercury, action to take if you have a spill, and where and when to dispose of mercury containing items. For more information call DEP's Office of Pollution Prevention at (860) 424-3297

Recycled Products Purchasing Cooperative Expands Nationwide



The Recycled products Purchasing Cooperative (RPPC) is expanding nationwide on October 1, 2000. The purchasing cooperative is a collaborative non-profit effort that is aimed at increasing the amount of recycled paper used by businesses and public entities. The RPPC is accomplishing this goal by providing recycled paper at prices that often meet or beat the price of non-recycled or virgin paper.

This year member purchases are expected to reach over 50,000 cases - saving water, energy, and the equivalent of 10,000 full grown trees. Hundreds of members purchase through the RPPC including: Union Bank of California,



the City of San Diego, AFG Industries, Sea world, JFK University, Aloha Printing, Mountaineers Books, and many others. Solana Recyclers, a non-profit organization, coordinates the RPPC nationally and is partnering with WasteCap of Massachusetts to promote the RPPC in the New England region.

Membership in the purchasing cooperative is FREE and the paper available is performance tested and performance recommended by the U.S. Government Printing Office. Currently the RPPC provides 30% post-consumer recycled paper and plans to carry higher percentage post-consumer papers in the near future.

For more information about the Co-op visit <http://recycledproducts.org> or call (800) 694-8355.

Free Carpeting Awarded to Two Green Businesses

As part of our Connecticut Recycles Day celebration, the Special Events committee held a green business contest to identify and reward two businesses with exemplary recycling programs. Similar to the Green School contest, these businesses not only get recognized for having great programs but will also serve as mentors for other businesses who need help in improving their recycling programs. Each business will receive a roomful of recycled carpeting as their prize. The carpeting is being provided through the generous sponsorship of Milliken Carpet and Interface Carpet. The Connecticut Recyclers Coalition is sponsoring installation costs for the carpeting.

This year's winners are Pitney Bowes of Stamford and the "It's Only Natural Restaurant" in Middletown. Pitney Bowes, a manufacturer with 35,000 employees, has an award winning recycling and waste reduction program. In 1998 they recycled 11.5 million pounds of materials, representing a 75% rate of recycling company wide! In addition to the mandated items they recycle plastics #1, #2 and #6 (polystyrene); electronics, small motors, pallets, mixed paper, rubber and more. They buy recycled office supplies including paper, toner cartridges and other office supplies. They have also implemented business practices that reduce waste. One example is their substitution of reusable plastic totes for single use corrugated boxes for inter-facility transport. This one change alone saved them \$100,000 and reduced corrugated usage by 132,000 pounds annually.

It's Only Natural Restaurant recycles the mandatory items, uses espresso grinds to fertilize plants in the restaurant, and also recycles poly-coated containers, toner cartridges and computers. They practice double-sided copying and use e-mail to advertise to their customers. They also actively purchase products such as tissues, paper towels, and toilet paper made from recycled materials. They give their used scrap metal to a local artist who makes all of his creations from recycled materials. The restaurant serves as a gallery for this recycled art. We congratulate these businesses on their outstanding programs!

The Department of Environmental Protection is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer, providing programs and services in a fair and impartial manner. In conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, DEP makes every effort to provide equally effective services for persons with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities needing auxiliary aids and services, or for more information by voice or TTY/TDD call (860) 424-3000.

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